

CONNECTICUT VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

We write in opposition to SB 837, An Act Concerning Various Fees. The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association represents over 95% of the licensed veterinarians in the state of Connecticut.

SB 837 proposes an increase in the licensing fee for veterinarians from \$450 to \$565. While such an increase might be regarded as incidental to some professions, to a veterinarian this is a significant change. At \$450 we were already the highest fee nationally by almost 2: 1. With such a high fee, a young veterinarian just out of school and likely facing \$150,000 or more in educational debt will think twice about locating here. As a result, Connecticut, a state without a veterinary school on its soil is at a disadvantage in attracting new veterinarians to live and work here. Just a few examples: the Massachusetts licensing fee is \$84 per year, the Rhode Island licensing fee is \$330 per two years, the New York State licensing fee is \$340 for 3 years and the California licensing fee is \$250 for 2 years.

In a profession that already is experiencing a manpower shortage here and nationally, a licensing fee such as this will serve only repel new veterinarians considering locating here. Without a school of veterinary medicine of our own our students incur school loan debt in excess of \$150,000 as out of state students elsewhere, in a profession in which starting salaries are typically less than \$50,000. We also have the dubious distinction of a perceived high cost of living higher than many other states, even in the northeast.

Veterinary practice owners, the vast majority very small business owners, will be reluctant to take on additional expense in helping license new associates, further depressing immigration of young veterinarians. The shortage of veterinarians affects not only the health of our pet population, but also the safety of our food animal industry and the public health and medical research communities, as the veterinary profession encompasses a wide range of careers.

While we already endure the disadvantage of our licensure fees being the highest in the nation by far for many years, we urge you to not compound this problem with a further increase at this critical time.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eva Ceranowicz DVM
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Co-Chairs, Government Affairs Committee
Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association